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JOHN FREDERICK

HELVETIUS'

GOLDEN CALF,

WHICH THE WORLD WORSHIPS AND ADORES:

IN WHICH IS DISCUSSED

THE MOST RARE MIRACLE OF NATURE

IN THE TRANSMUTATION OF METALS,

VIZ.:

**HOW AT THE HAGUE A MASS OF LEAD WAS IN
A MOMENT OF TIME CHANGED INTO GOLD
BY THE INFUSION OF A SMALL
PARTICLE OF OUR STONE.**

JOB, xxvii., 5:—"Great things doeth God which we cannot comprehend."

SENECA, Epist. 77:—"We must learn, in our pursuit of wisdom, to listen with equanimity to the reproaches of the foolish, and to despise contempt itself."

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TO THE
MOST HONOURABLE AND EXCELLENT
DR. THEODORE KETJES,
*A great physician, and traveller in Turkey and other
foreign lands, now in practice at Amsterdam,
and my intimate friend;*

AND TO THE
MOST HONOURABLE AND PROFOUNDLY LEARNED
DR. JOHN CASPAR FAUSIUS,
*Councillor and Court Physician to the Count
Palatine of Heidelberg;*

AND
DR. CHRISTIAN MENTZELIUS,
Councillor and Court Physician to the Elector of Brandenburg,

MY HONOURED PATRONS, AND
BELOVED FRIENDS.

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

**TO THE ABOVE-NAMED NOBLE AND HONOURABLE
FRIENDS AND MASTERS.**

I neither can nor will withhold from my honoured and beloved friends the knowledge of this Spagyric Art, and of the most precious and miraculous Arcanum, which I have not only seen with my own eyes, but also executed with my own hands, by changing a mass of lead into solid gold, persistently resisting any test of fire, through the addition of a small particle of our transmutatory powder. It can no longer be pretended that our Art does not possess the power which it claims, or that the Mercury of the Sages is not the great and glorious fountain of all natural marvels. This wonderful secret has, through the grace of God, been revealed to me, and as it is unworthy of man, created in the image of God, to maintain silence in regard to God's miraculous works, like the brute beasts, I have determined to unveil this grand Arcanum to you, my beloved friends; and I will now gird myself to tell you all that I know and have heard of the sayings and doings of the Great Artist Elias. It was not, indeed, he who revealed to me the grand secret; yet his conversation was so instructive that I cannot refrain from reporting it to you word for word. It is my earnest wish, honoured friends and masters, that this Book may meet

with a kindly reception at your hands, and that you may derive from it both enjoyment and profit. With this hope, I remain,

Your humble Servant,

JOHN FREDERICK HELVETIUS

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CHAPTER I.

BEFORE I begin to write about the philosophical Pygmy vanquishing the Giants, my honoured friends and masters, you must permit me to transcribe a passage from the works of Helmontius (*Arbor Vitæ*, folio 630): "I cannot but believe that there is such a thing as a gold and silver making Stone. At the same time, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that hundreds of painstaking Alchemists are daily being led astray by impostors or ignorant professors of the Spagyric Art." For this reason I shall not be astonished if—immediately upon perusing my book—multitudes of these deluded victims start up, and contradict the assertion which I have made in regard to the truth of this Art. One of these gentry denounces Alchemy as a work of the Devil; another describes it as sheer nonsense and humbug; a third admits the possibility of transmuting metals into gold, but maintains that the whole process costs more money than it is worth. But I do not wonder at these opinions. It is a hackneyed saying of human nature that we gape at those things whose purpose we do not understand, but we investigate things pleasurable to know. The Sages should therefore remember the words of Seneca (*De Moribus*): "You are not yet blessed, if the multitude does not laugh at you." But I do not care whether they believe or contradict my teaching about the transmutation of metals; I rest calmly satisfied in the knowledge that I have seen it with my own eyes, and performed it with my own hands. Even in our degenerate age these wonders are still possible; even now the Medicine is prepared which is worth twenty tons of gold, nay, more, for it has virtue to bestow that which all the gold of the world cannot buy, *viz.*, health. Blessed is that physician who knows our soothing medicinal Potion of Mercury, the great panacea of death and disease. But God does not reveal this

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glorious knowledge to all men indiscriminately; and some men are so obtuse (with a judicial blindness) that they wonder at the activity of the simplest forces of Nature, as, for instance, the attractive power which the magnet exercises upon the steel. But (whether they believe it or not) there is a corresponding magnetic force in gold which attracts Mercury, in silver which attracts copper, and so with all other metals, minerals, stones, herbs, plants, etc. . . . We must not be surprised at this persistent opposition to truth: the light of the sun pains the eyes of owls.

As a matter of fact, we human beings take too much upon ourselves in hastily and dogmatically judging of things which we do not understand. We deny the influence of the stars upon earthly things, and by that denial only exhibit our ignorance. And what do we know of the secret forces which slumber in plants. You may know nothing of the glory of the Angels, the brightness of the heavens, the transparency of the air, the limpidity of the water, the variety of colours in flowers, the hardness of stones and metals, the proportionate beauty of men and animals, the image of God in regenerate souls, the faith of believers, the rationality of the mind, &c.—for we may be blind and without feeling or understanding—and yet the beauty of all these things is not in the least affected by our ignorance.

If we bear these considerations in mind, they ought to stop our mouths when we feel tempted to deny the possibility of such wonderful transmutatory virtue being inherent in our Stone. Still, it must not be supposed that I wish to force this knowledge upon any one. God has reserved it for the worthy, and I know that it can never become known to the wicked, the irreligious, or the scornful. All I propose to do is to lay before the reader, for his diligent consideration, those conversations which have passed between the Artist Elias and myself, in regard to the nature of this Stone, the splendour of which (being more glorious than the dawn, more brilliant than a carbuncle, more bright than the sun or gold) has not yet faded from my mind. The contempt of the scornful, and the ignorance of the foolish I despise. Their ephemeral babble will soon be swept away by the river of forgetfulness; but our triumphant Art, which is established upon a foundation of adamant, upon the foundation'

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of God's own truth, will abide unshaken throughout all ages. For adepts according to ancient experience have given their word that this natural mystery is only to be found with JEHOVA Saturninely placed in the centre of the world. But those we call blessed, who can purge the Queen of the Sages of her impurity, who can circulate the Catholic Virgin Earth by means of our crystalline Physico-magical Art, and who have beheld the King, with his crown on his head, and his strength of inward fire, come forth from the chamber of his crystal grave, his bodily semblance glorified with all the most beautiful hues that the world affords, like a shining carbuncle, or like a transparent, compact, and diaphanous crystal—like a salamander that has spued forth all water, and washes away the leprosy of base metals with fire. Moreover, they shall behold the abyss of the Spagyric Art, where in the mineral kingdom, the same so royal art has, to a certain extent, for many years (in, as it were, the safest retreat of all) lain concealed. The Sages have seen the river in which Æneas was cleansed of his mortality—the river of Pactolus in Lydia which was changed into gold by King Midas bathing in it—the bath of Diana—the spring of Narcissus—the blood of Adonis trickling upon the snowy breast of Venus, whence was produced the anemone—the blood of Ajax, from which sprang the beautiful hyacinth flower

—the blood of the Giants killed by Jupiter's thunderbolt—the tears which Althea shed when she doffed her golden robes—the magic water of Medea, out of which grass and flowers sprang forth—the Potion which Medea prepared from various herbs for the rejuvenescence of old Jason—the Medicine of Aesculapius—the magic juice, by the aid of which Jason obtained the Golden Fleece—the garden of the Hesperides, where the trees bear golden apples in rich abundance—Atalanta turned aside from the race by the three golden apples—Romulus transformed by Jupiter into a god—the transfiguration of the soul of Julius Cæsar into a Comet—Juno's serpent, Pytho, born of decomposed earth after Deucalion's flood—the fire at which Medea lit her seven torches—the Moon kindled by Phaëthon's conflagration—Arcadia, in which Jupiter was wont to walk abroad—the habitation of Pluto in whose vestibule lay the three-headed Cerberus—the Pile, on which Hercules burnt those limbs which he had received from his

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mother, with fire, till only the fixed and incombustible elements derived from his father were left, and he became a god—and the rustic cottage whose roof was made of pure gold. Blessed, yea, thrice blessed, is the man to whom Jehovah has revealed the method of preparing that Divine Salt by which the metallic or mineral body is corrupted, destroyed, and mortified, while its soul in the meantime is revived for the glorious [resurrection](#) of the philosophical body—blessed, I say, is he to whom the knowledge of our Art is vouchsafed in answer to prayer throughout all his work for the Holy Spirit! For it should be remembered that this is the only way in which our Art of Arts is vouchsafed to man, and if you would attain it, the service of God ought to be your chief business. By committing themselves to this sacred and practical path of piety, and to theosophical colloquies alone with Jehovah, all true students of this Art will in due course of time, behold the sight which will gladden their hearts. Blessed, also, is he to whom some adept graciously flings wide the gates of knowledge, and to whom the golden road of the King is thus manifested! . . . I am afraid that the Preface will not please all my readers; nevertheless, I have a good hope that it will cheer and hearten the better part of them. Drink, my friends, from the fountain of truth, which wells forth in the Dialogue that I shall hereafter set down, and slake therewith the thirst of your souls, for my words shall be sweeter to you than nectar or ambrosia. For I bear in mind the saying of Julius Cæsar Scaliger that "the end of wisdom is its communication," and the teaching of Gregory of Nyssenens, who affirms "that the good delight to impart their knowledge to others, because it is the greatest joy to them to be useful."

CHAPTER II.

The truth of this Art is maintained by many illustrious writers, of whom the following are the most distinguished representatives of their class:

Paracelsus (*Rev. Natur.*, ix., fol. 358) has the following words: "The true sign by which the Tincture of the Physicists is known, is its power of transmuting all imperfect metals into silver (if it be white) or gold (if it be red), if but a small particle

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of it be injected into a mass of such metals liquefied in a crucible."

Again: "The invincible Star of the Metals vanquishes all things, and changes them into a nature similar to its own. This gold and silver are better than those found in mines for the preparation of arcane medicines from it."

Again: "I say that any Alchemist, who has the Star of Gold, can change all metals into that precious substance."

Again: "Our Tincture of Gold contains stars, is a substance of the greatest fixity, is unchangeable in multiplication, is a red powder (with almost a saffron tinge), liquid like resin, transparent like crystal, fragile like glass, is of a rubinate colour, and of great specific gravity."

Again, in Paracelsus' book called "The Heaven of the Sages," and in his seventh book on the "Transmutation of Natural Things," he bears witness to the same fact: "Transmutation is a great natural mystery, which is by no means—as fools suppose—contrary to the course of Nature, or the law of God. Without this Philosopher's Stone, the imperfect metals can be transmuted neither into gold nor silver."

Paracelsus, in his Manual concerning the Medicinal Philosopher's Stone, says: "Our Stone is the heavenly and super-perfect Medicine, because it washes away all the impurities of metals."

Henry Khunrath, in his "Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom" (fol. 147), has the following words: "I have visited many lands, and had speech of many learned men. I have seen the Green Catholic Lion, and the Blood of the Lion, *i.e.*, the Gold of the Sages, with my own eyes, have touched it with my hands, tasted it with my tongue, smelt it with my nose. By its means I have cured many whose life was despaired of."

Again (fol. 202): "That which I describe is not a myth: you shall handle it with your hands, see it with your eyes,—that Azoth, or Catholic Mercury of the Sages, which, together with inward and outward fire, in sympathetic harmony, through an unavoidable necessity, physico-magically united, is alone sufficient for the preparation of our Stone."

Again: "You shall see the Philosopher's Stone, our King and Lord of Lords, go forth from the chamber of its crystal tomb into

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this world, with its glorified body, regenerate and transcendently perfect, a brilliant carbuncle, whose most subtle and fully purified parts, being harmoniously mixed, are bound inseparably into one, altogether smooth, translucent as crystal, compact and exceedingly weighty. It is easily fused in fire, as resin, and after the flight of artificial quicksilver, just as wax. Without smoke it enters and penetrates solid bodies as oil enters paper. It is soluble in any liquid, melting and commingling with the same, fragile as glass, in a powder saffron-coloured, but in a solid mass, red like the ruby. Its purple colour is the mark of perfect fixation and fixed perfection, for it remains fixed and incombustible, even when exposed to fire, corrosive waters, or burning sulphur, since it is, like the salamander, incapable of being consumed by fire."

Again: "When the White Tincture is added to metals as a ferment, it transmutes them into purest silver; when the Red Tincture is mixed with pure gold, it is, within three days, multiplied by the quantity of the gold."

Helmontius ("On Life Eternal," page 590) has the following words: — "I have seen the Stone, and touched it with my own hands. . . . One-fourth of a grain of this powder, wrapped up in paper, I have cast upon eight ounces of boiling quicksilver in a crucible, and immediately the whole mixture was congealed into a mass like yellow wax; when the fusion was completed, the crucible contained eight ounces of purest gold (less eleven grains). So one grain of our powder had transmuted into purest gold 19,186 times its own weight of quicksilver,—and this process can be repeated indefinitely. The powder cleanses the metal from all impurity, and protects it from rust, decay, and fire, etc.

Again, the same Helmontius says, in his "Tree of Life" (page 630): — "I am compelled to believe that there is a Stone which produces gold and silver; for I have several times, with my own hands, projected one grain of powder upon one thousand grains of boiling quicksilver, which was thereby, in the presence of a great multitude of spectators, immediately transformed into precious gold. He who first gave me some of this transmutatory powder, had of it at least as much as would have sufficed for the production of 200,000 pounds of gold. He gave me about

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½ grain of the powder, with which I transmuted 9¾ ounces of quicksilver.

[paragraph continues]

Moreover, the most honourable and profoundly learned Dr. Theodore Ketjes, an eminent physician resident at Amsterdam, gave me a medal on which were the following inscriptions:



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On the obverse of the medal there appeared the following words:

AS THIS ART IS RARE AMONG MEN,
SO IT IS RARELY EXHIBITED:
PRAISED BE GOD FOR EVER WHO
HAS COMMUNICATED PART OF
HIS INFINITE POWER TO US HIS MOST
ABJECT CREATURES.

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It is also said that, in 1660, Alexander (a Scotch adept) effected a change of imperfect metals into gold, at Cologne, and at Hanover, etc.

There are also other instances on record of such transmutations having taken place.

The following is a genuine extract from a letter written by Dr. Kuffler: —

"First I found in my own laboratory, aquafortis, next in that of *Charles de Roy*, I poured it over calx of gold prepared in the ordinary way, and after the third cohobation, it sublimated with itself the tincture of gold in the neck of the retort, which I mingled with silver precipitated in the ordinary way, and I beheld that it had transmuted one ounce of sublimated tincture of gold in the crucible with the usual flux, and two ounces of precipitated silver, into an ounce-and-a-half of the best gold, while the third portion remained silver. The gold was white and fixed, but the remaining two parts were the best silver, fixed under the test of any fire. This is my experience, and I need not say that it has made me a most enthusiastic believer in Alchemy."

I, Helvetius, have seen this gold, without the tincture, white.

Another proof of the genuineness of this Art was given at the Hague, in the year 1664, when a silversmith, of the name of Gril, in the presence of many [witnesses](#), transformed one pound of lead, partly into gold, and partly into silver. Gril had obtained the Tincture from a certain weaver of the name of John Caspar Knöttner, with the injunction to use it for metals only - Gril placed it with some lead in a glass cake dish, and after about a fortnight the above change was found to have taken place. I can testify to the genuineness of this case, as Gril was personally known to me, and I saw the transmuted lead, which exhibited on its surface a most beautiful silver crystal, in the form of a star, as though prepared by most ingenious artifice with a circle. The pity was that Gril, being obstinate and crafty, would not

let Knöttner know whether it was his "Spirit of Salt" that had effected the change; and some time afterwards, when Gril's obstinacy had at length been overcome, Knöttner had forgotten which of his many chemical preparations he had given to him, and, before he was able to find out, he and his family

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were swept away by the plague, while Gril fell into the water and was drowned. Afterwards, not one of the many goldseekers was able to discover the secret which died with them. Nevertheless, it is a matter of never ceasing admiration that the Philosopher's Stone should have the power of transmuting, in so short a time, the dull and heavy nature of lead into the bright and brilliant nature of silver and gold; of this natural law, however, we have an illustration in the fact that steel, by contact with the magnet, acquires its magnetic power.

CHAPTER III.

Since promises are all the more acceptable, the more quickly they are fulfilled, I will now, without any further delay, address myself to the task which I have set myself to accomplish.

On the 27 December, 1666, in the forenoon, there came to my house a certain man, who was a complete stranger to me, but of an honest, grave countenance, and an authoritative mien, clothed in a simple garb like that of a Memnonite. He was of middle height, his face was long and slightly pock-marked, his hair was black and straight, his chin close shaven, his age about 43 or 44, and his native province, as far as I could make out, North Holland.

After we had exchanged salutations, he asked me whether he might have some conversation with me. He wished to say something to me about the Pyrotechnic Art, as he had read one of my Tracts (directed against the Sympathetic Powder of Dr. Digby), in which I hinted a suspicion whether the Grand Arcanum of the Sages was not after all a gigantic hoax. He, therefore, took that opportunity of asking me whether I could not believe that such a grand mystery might exist in the nature of things, by means of which a physician could restore any patient whose vitals were not irreparably destroyed. I answered: "Such a Medicine would be a most desirable acquisition for any physician; nor can any man tell how many secrets there may be hidden in Nature; yet, though I have read much about the truth of this Art, it has never been my good fortune to meet with a real Master of the Alchemical Science." I also enquired whether he was a medical man, since

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he spoke so learnedly about the Universal Medicine. In reply, he modestly disclaimed my insinuation, and described himself as a brassfounder, who had always taken a great interest in the extraction of medicinal potions from metals by means of fire. After some further conversation; the Artist Elias (for it was he) thus addressed

me: "Since you have read so much in the works of the Alchemists about this Stone, its substance, its colour, and its wonderful effects, may I be allowed the question, whether you have not yourself prepared it?" On my answering his question in the negative, he took out of his bag a cunningly-worked ivory box, in which there were three large pieces of a substance resembling glass, or pale sulphur, and informed me that here was enough of the Tincture for the production of 20 tons of gold. When I had held the precious treasure in my hand for a quarter of an hour (during which time I listened to a recital of its wonderful curative properties), I was compelled to restore it to its owner, which I could not help doing with a certain degree of reluctance. After thanking him for his kindness in showing it to me, I then asked how it was that his Stone did not display that ruby colour which I had been taught to regard as characteristic of the Philosopher's Stone. He replied that the colour made no difference, and that the substance was sufficiently mature for all practical purposes. My request that he would give me a piece of his Stone (though it were no larger than a coriander seed), he somewhat brusquely refused, adding, in a milder tone, that he could not give it me for all the wealth I possessed, and that not on account of its great preciousness, but for some other reason which it was not lawful for him to divulge; nay, if fire could be destroyed in that way, he would immediately throw it all into the fire. Then, after a moment's consideration, he enquired whether I could not shew him into a room at the back of the house, where we should be less liable to the observation of passers-by. On my conducting him into the state parlour (which he entered without wiping his dirty boots), he demanded of me a gold coin, and while I was looking for it, he produced from his breast pocket a green silk handkerchief, in which were folded up five medals, the gold of which was infinitely superior to that of my gold piece. On the medals appeared the following inscriptions: —



I was filled with admiration, and asked my visitor whence he had obtained that wonderful knowledge of the whole world? He replied that it was a gift freely bestowed on him by a friend who had stayed a few days at his house, who had also taught him to change common flints and crystals into stones more precious than rubies, chrysoliths, and sapphires; he also revealed to me the preparation of crocus of iron (an infallible cure for dysentery), of metallic liquid (an efficacious remedy for dropsy), and of many other infallible Medicines, to which, however, I paid no great heed, as I was impatiently anxious to have the chief

secret of all revealed to me. The Artist told me that his Master had bidden him bring him a glass full of warm water, to which he had added a little white powder, and in which one ounce of silver had melted like ice in warm water. Of this draught he emptied one-half, and gave the rest to me. Its taste resembled that of fresh milk, and its effect was most exhilarating."

I asked my visitor whether the potion was a preparation of the Philosopher's Stone? But he answered: "You should not be so inquisitive."

Then he told me that, at the bidding of the Artist, he had taken down a piece of leaden water-pipe, and melted the lead in a pot, whereupon the Artist had taken some sulphureous powder out of a little box on the point of a knife, and cast it into the melted lead, and that after exposing the compound for a short time to a fierce fire, he had poured forth a great mass of molten gold upon the brick floor of the kitchen.

"The Master bade me take one-sixteenth of the gold for myself as a keepsake, and to distribute the rest amongst the poor; which I did by making over a large sum in trust to the Church of Sparrendam. At length, before bidding me farewell, my friend taught me this Divine Art."

When my strange visitor had concluded his narrative, I besought him to give me a proof of his assertion, by performing the transmutatory operation on some metals in my presence. He answered evasively, that he could not do so then, but that he would return in three weeks, and that, if he was then at liberty to do so, he would shew me something that would make me open my eyes. He appeared punctually to the promised day, and invited me to take a walk with him, in the course of which we discoursed profoundly on the secrets of Nature in fire, though I noticed that my companion was very chary in imparting information about the Grand Arcanum; he spoke very learnedly and gravely concerning the holiness of the Art (just as if he were a clergyman), and said that God had commanded the initiated to make the secret known only to the deserving. At last I asked him pointblank to shew me the transmutation of metals. I besought him to come and dine with me, and to spend the night at my house; I entreated; I expostulated; but in vain. He remained firm. I reminded him of his promise. He

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retorted that his promise had been conditional upon his being permitted to reveal the secret to me. At last, however, I prevailed upon him to give me a piece of his precious Stone—a piece no larger than a grain of rape seed. He delivered it to me as if it were the most princely donation in the world. Upon my uttering a doubt whether it would be sufficient to tinge more than four grains of lead, he eagerly demanded it back. I complied, in the hope that he would exchange it for a larger piece; instead of which he divided it in two with his thumb, threw away one-half and gave me back the other, saying:

"Even now it is sufficient for you." Then I was still more heavily disappointed, as I could not believe that anything could be done with so small a particle of the Medicine. He, however, bade me take two drachms, or half an-ounce of lead, or even a little more, and to melt it in the crucible; for the Medicine would certainly not tinge more of the base metal than it was sufficient for. I answered that I could not believe that so small a quantity of Tincture could transform so large a mass of lead. But I had to be satisfied with what he had given me, and my chief difficulty was about the application of the Tincture. I confessed that when I held his ivory box in my hand, I had managed to extract a few small crumbs of his Stone, but that they had changed my lead, not into gold, but only into glass. He laughed, and said that I was more expert at theft than at the application of the Tincture. "You should have protected your spoil with 'yellow wax,' then it would have been able to penetrate the lead and to transmute it into gold. As it was, your Medicine evaporated, by a sympathetic process, in the metallic smoke. For all metals, gold, silver, tin, and mercury, are corrupted by the fumes of lead, and degenerated into glass." I shewed him the crucible, and there he discovered the yellow piece of Medicine still adhering to it. He promised to return at nine o'clock the next morning, and then he would shew me that my Medicine could well be used for transmuting lead into gold. With this promise I had to declare myself satisfied. Still I asked him to favour me with some information about the preparation of the Arcanum. He would not tell me anything about the cost and the time; "as to its substance," he continued, "it is prepared from two metals or minerals; the minerals are better because they contain a larger

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quantity of mature Sulphur. The solvent is a certain celestial Salt, by means of which the Sages dissolve the earthy metallic body, and this process elicits the precious Elixir of the Sages. The work is performed from beginning to end in a crucible over an open fire; it is consummated in four days, and its cost is only about three florins. Neither the Mineral from the Egg nor the Solvent Salt are very expensive." I replied that his statement was contradicted by the sayings of the Sages, who assign seven or nine months as the duration of the Work. His only answer was that the sayings of the Sages were to be understood in a philosophical sense and no ignorant person could apprehend their true meaning. I besought him that, as a stranger had made known to him this precious mystery, so he would extend to me the same kindness, and give me at least some information which would remove all the most formidable obstacles out of my path; for if one knew one thing, other facts connected with it were more easily discovered. But the Artist replied: "It is not so in our Magistry; if you do not know the whole operation from beginning to end, you know nothing at all. I have told you all; yet you do not know how the crystal seal of Hermes is broken, and how the Sun colours it with the marvellous splendour of its metallic rays, or in what mirror the metals see with the eyes of Narcissus the possibility of their transmutation, or from what rays adepts collect the fire of perfect metallic fixation." With these words, and a promise to return at nine o'clock the next morning, he left me. But at the

stated hour on the following day he did not make his appearance; in his stead, however, there came, a few hours later, a stranger, who told me that his friend the Artist was unavoidably detained, but that he would call at three o'clock in the afternoon. The afternoon came; I waited for him till half-past seven o'clock. He did not appear. Thereupon my wife came and tempted me to try the transmutation myself. I determined, however, to wait till the morrow, and in the meantime, ordered my son to light the fire, as I was now almost sure that he was an impostor. On the morrow, however, I thought that I might at least make an experiment with the piece of "Tincture" which I had received; if it turned out a failure, in spite of my following his directions closely, I might then be quite certain that my visitor had been a

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mere pretender to a knowledge of this Art. So I asked my wife to put the Tincture in wax, and I myself, in the meantime, prepared six drachms of lead; I then cast the Tincture, enveloped as it was in wax, on the lead; as soon as it was melted, there was a hissing sound and a slight effervescence, and after a quarter of an hour I found that the whole mass of lead had been turned into the finest gold. Before this transformation took place, the compound became intensely green, but as soon as I had poured it into the melting pot it assumed a hue like blood. When it cooled, it glittered and shone like gold. We immediately took it to the goldsmith, who at once declared it to be the finest gold he had ever seen, and offered to pay fifty florins an ounce for it.

The rumour, of course, spread at once like wildfire through the whole city; and in the afternoon, I had visits from many illustrious students of this Art; I also received a call from the Master of the Mint and some other gentlemen, who requested me to place at their disposal a small piece of the gold, in order that they might subject it to the usual tests. I consented, and we betook ourselves to the house of a certain silversmith, named Brechtil, who submitted a small piece of my gold to the test called "the fourth": three or four parts of silver are melted in the crucible with one part of gold, and then beaten out into thin plates, upon which some strong aquafortis is poured. The usual result of this experiment is that the silver is dissolved, while the gold sinks to the bottom in the shape of a black powder, and after the aquafortis has been poured off, and melted once more in the crucible, resumes its former shape. . . . When we now performed this experiment, we thought at first that one-half of the gold had evaporated; but afterwards we found that this was not the case, but that, on the contrary, two scruples of the silver had undergone a change into gold.

Then we tried another test, *viz.*, that which is performed by means of a septuple of Antimony; at first it seemed as if eight grains of the gold had been lost, but afterwards, not only had two scruples of the silver been converted into gold, but the silver itself was greatly improved both in quality and malleability. Thrice I performed this infallible test, discovering that every drachm of gold produced an increase of a scruple of gold, but the

silver is excellent and extremely flexible. Thus I have unfolded to you the whole story from beginning to end. The gold I still retain in my possession, but I cannot tell you what has become of the Artist Elias. Before he left me, on that last day of our friendly intercourse, he told me that he was on the point of undertaking a journey to the Holy Land. May the Holy Angels of God watch over him wherever he is, and long preserve him as a source of blessing to Christendom! This is my earnest prayer on his and our behalf.

CHAPTER IV.

I will now proceed to give an account of the conversations which passed between the Artist Elias and myself (the Physician), on the occasion of his kindly visits to my house. The reader is to imagine the Artist entering my room, and introducing himself with the following words:

I salute you, Dr. Helvetius. I am one of the readers of the Tract you wrote against Dr. Digby, and his Sympathetic Pills, and I should like to have some conversation with you on 'his and kindred subjects. I am a close student of Nature's secrets, and delight in the company of those who have a kindred aim. And, certainly, I have found as the result even of my paltry investigations, that no natural marvels are to be rashly pronounced impossible.

PHYSICIAN.

Let me bid you a hearty welcome. Discourses on the secrets of Nature are the great delight of my heart, as they are of yours. Come with me, I pray you, into my study.

ARTIST ELIAS.

You do, indeed, possess a wonderfully well-equipped laboratory, and I make no doubt that, by its means, you have sounded all the secret depths of Alchemy. But why do you keep so many medicines? Do you not believe that there exists in the nature of things one or more remedies, fully capable of counteracting disease in all cases, where neither the heart, the

liver, nor the lungs, are entirely destroyed, or the vital juices altogether consumed?

PHYSICIAN.

From what you say I conclude that you are either one of the profession, or else a Master of the Chemical Art. I do believe, as you say, that there exist in Nature other more excellent medicines than any that I possess. This view is both natural and reasonable, and it is supported by the authority of many celebrated writers. They tell us of a certain Universal Medicine, which, as they say, is known only to

the elect, but it enables its possessors to heal all diseases (even those otherwise incurable), and to prolong their lives almost indefinitely. Yet is anyone able to conduct us to this miraculous fountain, whence this vitalizing water is drawn? I am afraid it is a hopeless aspiration.

ARTIST ELIAS.

I am not, as you suppose, a physician, but only a brass-founder. I have, however, from a very early age, taken an all-absorbing interest in the Art of Alchemy, and the secret qualities of metals. And as a result of my investigations (humble as they have been), I most decidedly incline to the belief that the discovery of the Medicine you mention will, even in our degenerate age, be vouchsafed to some earnest student, as a reward of prayer and work.

PHYSICIAN.

It is true that God grants His gifts to those who love Him ungrudgingly and without upbraiding. But I also find that in former ages, as in our own, there have lived hosts of chemists who have spent their lives, as the saying is, in scooping up water with a sieve. Moreover, it seems quite impossible to gain from the writings of the genuine Sages any intelligible information, either as to the substance or the mode of preparation of this Universal Philosopher's Stone. . . . In the meantime, it is the duty of a good physician to make the most of those appliances for the cure of disease, which are actually within his reach. If he refused to give any medicines until he had discovered the

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Universal Remedy, his patients would suffer through his folly and carelessness. Moreover, taking into consideration the great variety of human constitutions, I really do not see how one Medicine can possibly cure all diseases; the effect of morbid matter upon the glands and vital juices of different persons being well known to be utterly different. If you give a certain quantity of wine to Peter, it will make him quarrelsome, and even furious; its effect on Paul is to produce in him the mildness and timidity of a lamb; in Matthew it causes gaiety and laughter; while it makes Luke melancholy and tearful. In the same way, the morbid matter known as scorbutic poison becomes, in Peter's case, an acid, consuming the whole of the vital juices and organs, and breaking out on his hands and feet in the shape of bluish, discoloured boils. The same poison in the body of Paul is changed into a bitter aperient, which shews itself on the arms and feet in the form of subcutaneous red spots, with punctures like flea-bites, and, in times of plague, turns to anthrax. In the body of Matthew the poisonous fluid is of a sweetish taste, and produces on arms and legs watery tumours, like those seen in dropsical subjects; in times of plague, they turn to plague sores. In Luke's case, the humour is saltish and acrid; the swellings on his arms and legs are dry and inflammatory; and when there is infectious matter in the air, the sores become so red and malignant as to produce madness and death. It stands to reason, then, that these different symptoms require

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different treatment, and that no one herb or medicine could possibly suffice for such different cases. The volatile bitter salt of Cochlearia, which relieves Peter, makes Paul worse; a fixed acid salt only aggravates the symptoms of Luke, but it very often suffices to produce a complete cure in the case of Paul. In every instance we require a remedy which is different from the morbid matter already in the system, and therefore capable of counteracting it. In the face of this need of specific remedies for every particular form of disease, you must pardon a medical man if he does not quite see the possibility of an Universal Medicine.

ARTIST ELIAS.

I admit the truth of all that you say, as far as the Vegetable Kingdom is concerned, though very few physicians employ this

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method of cure. At the same time, I see no reason why there should not be in the Mineral Kingdom an Universal Medicine which combines all the virtues of the different vegetable remedies you have named. I acknowledge that this Gift of Grace is bestowed only on a few persons; but the truth of the Alchemistic Art is too strongly supported to admit of any doubt.

PHYSICIAN.

I have by no means exhausted the list of objections which may with reason be urged against the existence of this Universal Medicine. But how can the same remedy be equally suited to the case of a man or a woman, a delicate and a robust person, the initiatory or the final stage of a disease, a chronic or an acute affection?

ARTIST ELIAS.

Your arguments against the Universal Medicine are very learned and orthodox, and I am not disinclined to allow to them some importance. At the same time, you will admit that "many men many minds" is a saying of some weight, and those who know anything by experience, are the best qualified to speak about it. The sweetest music does not delight all hearers; the best story appears dull to some readers; some like one kind of food or wine and some another: and so there are as many different verdicts about this Universal Medicine as there are (self-constituted) judges. But only he who is acquainted with its properties has a right to deliver an authoritative opinion. Now, it is quite true that in your common, tinkering Medicinal Art, which seeks to counteract only the separate symptoms or manifestations of disease, there is no room for an Universal Medicine. But the true physician knows that all disease (whatever shape it may assume) is simply a depression of the vital spirits, and that whatever strengthens vitality, will cut off the possibility of disease at the very source, expelling the humours which each produce their own peculiar malady, and I maintain that our Universal Medicine is a remedy of this radical kind. It gently promotes and

quickens the movement of the vital spirits, and thus, by renewing the source of life, renovates and quickens

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the whole frame, infusing new vitality and strength into every part. For this reason adepts call it the Great Mystery of Nature, and the preventive of old age and disease. By its aid any man may live the full term of days naturally allotted to him, and need have no fear of contagion, even when the plague, or some other malignant epidemic, is striking down hundreds of his neighbours.

PHYSICIAN.

If I take your meaning, this Remedy does not set itself merely to correct depraved humours, but directly restores the vital spirits themselves; and it cannot prolong existence beyond the span of life originally allotted to each man by the Creator, though it does prevent his being cut off prematurely by weakness or disease. All this sounds very reasonable. But there is another question I should like to ask. Does this Medicine change a man's temperament, so as to convert a phlegmatic person into one of a sanguine character, or a melancholy person into a gay and jovial boon companion?

ARTIST ELIAS.

Certainly not. It is impossible for any medicine of any kind to alter the nature of a man: just as wine does not produce a change in a man, but only brings out his true character. The effect of the Universal Medicine is of a corresponding kind. It is like the warmth of the Sun, which does not change or even modify the shapes, colours, and scents of the different flowers, but only fully develops all that is in them by means of its genial influence. . . . If our Universal Medicine possessed the property of prolonging the life of man beyond the term assigned to each individual by Divine foreknowledge, no doubt Sages like Hermes Trismegistus, Paracelsus, Raymond Lullius, Count Bernhard, and many other genuine possessors of this Great Mystery, would be still with us in the land of the living. It would be folly and madness to suppose that any medicine in the whole world can do more than protect a man against being cut off prematurely, *i.e.*, before his appointed time.

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PHYSICIAN.

All that you have said about the operation of this Blessed Universal Medicine seems both reasonable and in harmony with Nature's general plan of working. The worst of it is that, though I now fully believe in the existence of the Medicine, all my efforts to find it have hitherto resembled the futile endeavours of a mariner who, attempting to put out to sea in a frail boat, is again and again driven back to the shore by the united force of wind and wave. Though many illustrious persons have written concerning the preparation, they have so cautiously veiled it, that the smallest possible number

might become acquainted with the steps to be taken to arrive at their desire. The best thing one can do, I think, is to stay in one's laboratory, work and pray, and wait for God's blessing.

ARTIST ELIAS.

You reason well, my friend; yet you must not despair of learning the secret of the Alchemists' Art, especially if you can induce some adept to become your teacher. But we will now proceed to discuss the transmutatory virtues of our most precious Stone, which are still more wonderful than its medicinal properties.

PHYSICIAN.

Oh, I see! You wish to discuss the transmutation of metals. In the possibility of such transmutation, I certainly do feel constrained to believe, considering that I have heard and read of cases which admit of no manner of doubt, and in which such transmutation is attested by the most authentic and trustworthy witnesses (such as Dr. Kiffler, Helmont, Scotus, &c.), as having really taken place. I am especially thinking of that wonderful experiment of metallic transformation which was achieved at Prague, in the presence of the German Emperor Ferdinand III., when, by means of one grain of the Tincture, three pounds of Mercury were changed into the best gold; for that event was commemorated by a medal struck at the Imperial Mint. But though I firmly believe in the possibility of such a transmutatory Tincture, I have never in the whole course of my life come across any one who possessed it.

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ARTIST ELIAS.

You are quite right in what you say, albeit your belief or unbelief could not make any difference to the truth of our Art, just as a magnet would go on attracting steel, and rendering it magnetic by such contact, even if you did not credit it. It is also true that hitherto our secret has been rather hidden than revealed by those who have written about it in the obscurest of language. But you can no longer feel disposed to doubt that which you see with your own eyes; and here in this box you behold a large quantity of the true substance of the Sages. There! Examine it.

PHYSICIAN.

Is this yellow, sulphureous, glassy substance really and truly the Philosopher's Stone? Did you prepare it yourself? Surely you are hoaxing me!

ARTIST ELIAS.

No, indeed; you now hold the most precious of mundane treasures in your hand; and I myself prepared it from beginning to end. If you can take me to a room where we shall be more secret, I will show you some gold obtained through its means (and having been ushered into

the state parlour, he produced the five medals described above). These (said he) I keep in memory of my Master.

PHYSICIAN.

So you had a Master from whom you learned the glorious secret! How wonderful that I should at this moment be holding the true substance in my hands! Can you not give me a small piece of it, just enough to transmute four grains of lead into gold, so that I may be able to test the truth of your statement? Do give me a piece, at least as large as a grain of mustard seed, and let me make the trial! It would be a great kindness.

ARTIST ELIAS.

I admit that a certain stranger once instructed me both as to the possibility of this Art, and in its methods of procedure.

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But I cannot give you even a small fragment of my Tincture, though you offered me this room full of ducats; not because the substance is so precious in my eyes, but for another momentous reason which I may not reveal. Indeed, if fire could consume fire, I should at once throw the whole of this Tincture on the hearth. I will, however, return to you after the lapse of three weeks, and shew you some beautiful experiments which will both surprise and delight you. If by that time I shall have obtained leave to do so, I will also satisfy your curiosity by performing in your presence a change of lead into gold. In the meantime, I bid you good-bye, and warn you not to invest too much of your substance in the pursuit of this Art, as it will all turn to ashes.

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PHYSICIAN.

I am deeply obliged to you for your kindness in coming to me, and shewing me this Stone; but you can hardly expect me to be satisfied with the mere sight of it. I am one of those whose souls are always athirst for knowledge; and I believe that if our first parent Adam, who lost Paradise by touching the forbidden fruit, were alive at the present day, he would once more risk the happiness of his life in order to become possessed of the "golden apples from the garden of Atlas." I thank you most heartily, however, for comforting me with the prospect of your return in three weeks. I will endeavour to spend the interval in strict obedience to your wise and kindly counsel; but you may easily suppose that the feeling uppermost in my mind will be one of eager hope and longing for the fulfilment of your promise. I also thank you for the proof of your confidence involved in making yourself known to me as an adept of this Art. If the secret which you have entrusted to my safe keeping, were, by any accident, to come to the ears of a tyrannical prince or noble, would you be terrified by his threats into betraying it?

ARTIST ELIAS.

I have never made this secret known to anyone except to. yourself and one good old man. Nor must any human being hear or see the like in future. But if any prince or king were to cast me into prison, or put me to the rack, he would not be able

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to extract a single syllable of direct or indirect information from me by the most cruel tortures which he could devise; not even death itself would make me shrink from the path of duty, or become disloyal to my trust.

PHYSICIAN.

Are there any Alchemistic writers that are more easily understood than the rest, or who can at least be warranted to possess a real knowledge of those things wherein they undertake to instruct others?

ARTIST.

I do not read many of these books; but of all the writers on Alchemy whose works I have studied, I have found Sendivogius, the Cosmopolitan, to be the most trustworthy; also Basilus, in his twelve Keys. Truth has chosen the obscure style of Sendivogius for her hiding-place, if you could only discover her—just as our Substance is really and truly hidden and concealed in the outward bodies of all metals and minerals.

PHYSICIAN.

Accept once more my warmest thanks for all your kindness and friendly counsel. I do indeed believe that, as you say, the essences of metals are hidden in their outward bodies, as the kernel is hidden in the nut. Every earthly body, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, is the habitation and terrestrial abode of that celestial spirit, or influence, which is its principle of life and growth. The secret of Alchemy is the destruction of the body, which enables the Artist to get at, and utilize for his own purposes, the living soul. But what man is sufficient to search out this wonderful secret?

ARTIST ELIAS.

You have spoken truly, and judged rightly concerning the natural destruction of things; and if you find grace in the sight of God, He will commission either me or some other adept of our Art to unfold to you the right way of destroying the outward bodies of metals and seizing the inward, vital, life-giving

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soul. This gracious gift, I say, God may bestow on you sooner than you think, in answer to devout and earnest prayer. Once more, farewell, and rest assured that I will always remain your friend. I cherish a fond hope that I shall soon see you again, in a flourishing state of health.

With these words he departed; and I have already told you how after three weeks he came back and gave me a small piece of the transmutatory Tincture. But since our second parting I have neither set eyes on him, nor heard either of him or from him.

He has, however, left deeply seated in my heart the conviction that through metals and out of metals purified by highly refined and spiritualized metals there may be prepared the living gold and quicksilver of the Sages, which bring both metals and human bodies to perfection. If my friend had condescended to give me one or two practical hints as to the best method of proceeding in this Magistry, I might have discovered the grand secret of collecting the rays of the Sun and Moon in their own proper womb, whereby their power of metallic transmutation by magnetic sympathy might have been brought out. Thus I might have obtained the red seed which transmutes into gold, and the white seed which transmutes into silver. For the Artist Elias told me that the Chalybs of Sendivogius was that true Mercurial metallic humour which—without the aid of any corrosive—would suffice to separate the fixed rays of the Sun and Moon from their body, and to render them volatile and Mercurial for the dry philosophical Tincture which he shewed me, and the efficacy of which I subsequently experienced. This is the same method by which metals are still being produced day by day in the bowels of the earth, and stones developed, in their different saline wombs, out of the spiritual tingent sulphureous seed. . . . Metallic sulphur mixed with saltpetre, may be converted, by gentle heat, first into solid earth, then into air, then into limpid water, and then into glass of a most beautiful colour, and of a penetrativeness superior to that of fire—just as the chicken is developed out of the apparently lifeless egg by gentle heat. Between the different metals there exists a sympathy such as that between the magnet and steel, gold and quicksilver, silver and copper;

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and this sympathy is the *rationale* of the transmutation of metals. On the other hand, there are also metallic antipathies, such as that of lead to tin, of iron to gold, of lead to mercury—antipathies which have their counterpart in the animal and vegetable worlds. An accurate and comprehensive knowledge of these sympathies and antipathies is the one great qualification of every man who aspires to be a Master of this Art.

In making known to you all that I have seen and experienced, I am only following the maxim of Seneca, who said that he desired knowledge chiefly that he might impart it to others. If anyone doubts the truth of my statements, let him but live a pious and Christ-like life here below, and he will learn the truth of all things in the new Jerusalem above. That a share of this glory may be vouchsafed to you and him, is the prayer of

Your faithful and loving servant,
JOHN FREDERICK HELVETIUS, M.D.

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[Next: The All-Wise Doorkeeper or A Fourfold Figure](#)